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p-Stone, I.F.
I.F. Stone's
Weekly

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Sandy Grady
... On the Loose

63-Year-Old Muckraker A Wow at Penn

You could tell that I. F. Stone liked this. His eyes glittered like quartz in the auditorium lights. "I'm having so much fun I ought to be arrested," bubbled I. F. Stone.

And why not? Gadfly, maverick, muckraker, I. F. Stone was back at Penn where it all started. Never mind success stories. I. F. Stone is one of Philadelphia's great failure stories.



Grady

For openers, he was 49th in his Haverford High class of 50. At Penn he was a drop-out. As a newspaperman, failure was his specialty. The Philadelphia Record, the New York Compass, the New York Star and PM — when I. F. joined them they went down like ten-pins.

Then a delirious idea struck I. F. He would be his own publisher. I. F. Stone's Weekly—how's that for a catchy title?

He began with 5,300 subscribers in 1952. Now there are 65,000, but I.F. is still the whole staff. No journalist in Washington rakes the muck so well. Lately I.F. has been showing up on campuses and TV talk shows, where he is a sort of Harry Golden of the New Left.

"The Establishment reporters may know more than I do," said I.F. "But half are lies, and the other half they can't print."

The 300 kids at Penn loved zingers like that. Part owl, part elf, I.F. was on the podium in the black robes of the Philomathean Society.

Another glorious comeback for I.F. — the Philomatheans had rejected him in 1927.

They Listen

Name another 63-year-old newspaperman the shaggy heads will listen to seriously. But when I.F. answers the kids' questions, you can see why. . . .

On Reporting: "Every government is run by liars. That goes for Washington, Moscow or Peking. After every revolution the time-servers take over."

George Wallace: "Nixon and Agnew have gobbled him up. But remember, Wallace and Nixon give the right-wing a fat majority in this country. Power to the people? If they get it, a lot of us are in trouble."

Spiro Agnew: "He's not a serious menace. He only makes the TV executives nervous, and they don't have much guts anyway."

The Presidency: "We need a Toscanini to orchestrate all the factions in this country, and Nixon is tone-deaf."

The Black Panthers: "Much of what they say is stupid, but I soberly think the Panthers are victims of a police conspiracy."

The Middle East: "Ben Gurion said, 'Izzy, we can fight one, two, three wars, but what then?' There must be reconciliation with the Arabs. Too many Jews hold them in contempt. I don't want Israel to become a Little Prussia."

The CIA: "It tells the government what it wants to hear. No society will accept information counter to its cliches. And information isn't intelligence, which is why so many Ph.D.s are dopes." (Laughter from everybody but the Ph.D.s.)

The Weathermen: "I'm one of the few people who read their Manifesto down to the last cliché. Hogwash. You don't make revolutions out of half-baked ideas."

On the Future: "I find myself more hopeful than young people. When I brought children into the world in 1932 and 1938, things looked even worse. In 1950 I thought this country was going Fascist. It didn't. I see now that bureaucracy, tribalism, racism—they're universal. Government structures don't change that. We must learn to be better people."

No Instant Answers

Twenty-year-olds with hair down to their denim jackets don't cheer that. But they listen thoughtfully when I. F. Stone says: There are no instant answers, only insoluble problems.

"How tell that to kids who may go to this horrible, immoral war?" I. F. Stone was saying.

"How can I tell them that, with lunatics in Washington and Moscow who may blow us all up? But I know this: Hatred of country is partly hatred of self. You don't solve our terrible crimes by burning the country down. We need faith and patience."

The kids trailed him onto 34th St., asking questions. Drop-out, gadfly, patriarch, I. F. Stone was back where it began. This time nobody wanted to let him go.